



Queens Civic Congress

P.O. Box 238, Flushing, NY 11363 (718) 343-6779 fax: (718) 225-2818
www.queensciviccongress.org queensciviccongr@aol.com

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Contact:
Corey Bearak
(718) 343-6779

Testimony to City Council on Advertising on Sidewalk Sheds (Int. No. 623)

January 26, 2009

Presented by Patricia Dolan, Executive-Vice President, Queens Civic Congress

Good afternoon, I am Patricia Dolan, the executive vice-president of Queens Civic Congress, an umbrella of more than 110 community and neighborhood based organizations representing tenants, co-op and condo owners and homeowners living in every part of Queens. I am also the president of the Kew Gardens Hills Civic Association.

Construction sheds are a necessary evil and should be tolerated only as a safety measure while construction is taking place. Too often the sheds remain in place long after there is any need for them. Indeed, in these difficult economic times, we can expect to see more sheds on our streets for longer periods of time as developers abandon projects and leave the sheds behind. Legalizing ads on the sheds will only encourage developers to view the sheds as revenue producers for failed projects.

As the Mayor and the Council strive to preserve New Yorkers' quality of life and not to allow the City to spiral into the neglect and decrepitude experienced in the nineteen seventies and early eighties, care must be taken for the esthetics of the physical city. Keeping our streets and avenues attractive and well-lighted is intrinsic to that goal. Advertising on sidewalk sheds has no role in that mission.

For the past few years, at the behest of preservationists and neighborhood advocates, the Buildings Department has been enforcing regulations banning commercial ads from sidewalk sheds. The effects of that effort can be seen on the streets of Manhattan. As a Queens civic organization, we would like to see more enforcement of those regulations on our commercial streets. Now is the time to congratulate the Department for its effort; not repeal a regulation that helps make our environment more attractive.

Forty years after Lady Bird Johnson launched the successful nation-wide movement to rid the nation's highways of unsightly billboards and a decade after New York City banned most ads from arterial highways, the City Council should reject out of hand further "uglification" of our streets and avenues.

Ms. Dolan can be reached at 718-263-1760 or qvhca@nvbb.net

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